

## Coastal guide to nature and history: Port Phillip Bay

by Graham Patterson

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In just 172 pages, this book presents a remarkable amount of information on the geology, landforms, plants, animals, and history of the coast of Port Phillip Bay. It includes numerous photographs, mostly in colour, along with diagrams, sketches and useful extracts from street maps. An Introduction gives advice to people wanting to walk along the coast, including details about access, safety and tides. A section on Early History deals with Aboriginal sites, exploration and surveying, and the activities of early settlers. There is a page from Gary Presland's *First People* account of a day in the life of Aborigines at Bunwurrung camp, and a summary of William Buckley's 33-year adventure when he lived with indigenous people on and around the Bellarine Peninsula after escaping from the penal settlement at Sorrento in 1803.

A 118-page core section takes the reader on a 260 kilometre clockwise journey around Port Phillip Bay in four stages: Point Lonsdale to Geelong, Avalon to Williamstown, Port Melbourne to Frankston and Mount Eliza to Point Nepean. Within this framework, paragraphs deal with points of interest at successive sites, with illustrations (many pre-2000), documentary extracts (notably on the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee, Royalty arriving at St Kilda in 1901, and the Collins settlement at Sullivan Bay in 1803–04), explanations of place names, natural history and scientific information. Issues considered include the deepening of ship channels, the extinction of Sandridge Lagoon, the renaming of the Black Rock Sandstone as Beaumaris Sandstone, and beach erosion. The accounts are necessarily brief, but the References (p. 165) will guide those seeking more detail.

Another chapter illustrates coastal animals and plants, including birds, dolphins, snails and periwinkles, as well as mangroves and salt marshes, seaweeds and seagrasses, and the components of scrub and woodland. Coastal geology and landforms are considered briefly, and there is a note on coastal management.

Perhaps the instability of Olivers Hill (p. 97) has been influenced by tectonic movements on Selwyn Fault. There is no mention of the fact that the internationally important fossil site in Beaumaris Bay (p. 89) has largely disappeared under reclaimed land at Beaumaris Motor Yacht Club. There is an illustration of 'fossil burrows' at Black Rock Point (p. 86) and the suggestion that these originated because of a kind of 'mud lobster'. There may well be burrow structures in the sandstone here, but the illustrated features have usually been interpreted as fossil wood: flat-lying fragments of twigs, leaves and branches preserved in ironstone with a bark texture similar to that of *Banksia serrata*, a legacy of driftwood stranded on an accreting Mio-Pliocene sandy shore.

The writing is clear and good-humoured, the illustrations well chosen. This is a most useful and thoroughly worthwhile book, which will guide coastal walkers round Port Phillip Bay and stimulate their interest in the features that Graham Patterson describes.

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### Reference

Presland G (2010) *First people: the Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Central Victoria*. (Museum Victoria Publishing: Melbourne)